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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ELA; NSC FOR SHAPIRO; PARIS FOR WALLER;  
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TAGS: [PBTS](#) [PREL](#) [LE](#) [SY](#)  
SUBJECT: SYRIAN/LEBANESE BORDER MANAGEMENT CONCERNS

REF: DAMASCUS 168

Classified By: CDA Maura Connelly for reasons 1.5 b and d.

11. (C) Summary: Danish border management expert Lasse Rosenkrands, directly involved in an initial and follow-up review of the Lebanese border as mandated by UN Security Council resolution 1701, reported that Lebanon had made some progress in making technical and tactical security upgrades to the northern border, but it had failed to make any progress at improving border controls along the eastern border. Despite the progress in the north from 2007 to 2008, Rosenkrands reported the Lebanese had not intercepted a single weapons smuggler and had interdicted only a handful of petty smuggling operations. Rosenkrands noted that the Lebanese could undertake some "easy fixes" along the eastern border, yet many the concerns outlined in his initial report went unaddressed. Commenting on harbor and airport controls, Rosenkrands reported that cargo controls remained insufficient. End Summary.

12. (C) The Danish Embassy hosted an informal discussion on Lebanese/Syrian border management issues March 26. With European, American and Canadian diplomats in attendance, Danish border management expert Deputy Chief Superintendent Mr. Lasse Rosenkrands-Christensen led a discussion on the findings of the Lebanon Independent Border Assessment Team's (LIBAT) second report released in August 2008 (LIBAT II). Mr. Rosenkrands was part of the four-member team comprising of experts in border security, police, customs and military issues. The team examined the progress made by the Lebanese government in enhancing border management and security, as called for in Security Council resolution 1701. While the report focused primarily on Lebanese border issues, the Danish Embassy invited Mr. Rosenkrands to Syria to brief Syrian police officials as well as the diplomatic corps.

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"ISOLATED ISLANDS OF PROGRESS"  
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13. (C) Mr. Rosenkrands reported that his team's first report, LIBAT I, detailed recommendations and concerns found with the technical management of the Lebanese border. The recommendations were aimed at enhancing security along the Syrian/Lebanese border with an ultimate goal of decreasing cross-border smuggling of illicit materials/goods. Over a year later, when the team returned for a follow-up visit, it found only "isolated islands of progress." He noted that political issues continued to hamper technical implementation

of efficient controls, particularly border demarcation issues. According to Mr. Rosenkrands, conditions on the northern border, with the help of a German border team, had improved slightly, but there had been little to no progress elsewhere, particularly along Lebanon's eastern border.

14. (C) According to Rosenkrands, the Germans have been spearheading a pilot project in northern Lebanon in an effort to test not only potential levels of coordination and cooperation between Lebanon and its neighbors, but also between the various Lebanese security, military, police, and border elements. Along the northern border, there had been progress in the building of new border facilities along the "actual" border as opposed to seven kilometers behind the actual line. Additionally, observation posts had been erected and regular effective patrols had been established. Mr. Rosenkrands said previous border control elements in the north had based their patrol movements/routes on territorial defense rather than on techniques designed to foil smuggling.

He observed that in the north, many of the historical illegal border movements between neighboring border towns (where locals cross over to visit relatives, attend school or visit a doctor) had been resolved. According to Mr. Rosenkrands, local town officials had provided lists of names of the local population along the border to Lebanese officials so that historical movement between neighboring border towns could be monitored and controlled more effectively.

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"EASY FIXES" NOT UNDERTAKEN  
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15. (C) With respect to the eastern border, Mr. Rosenkrands said he found there had been no improvement at all since the original LIBAT I report. Cooperation, capacity, and logistical issues continued and the actual borders remained unclear. Speaking frankly, he said, many "easy fixes," such as infrastructure and doctrines, had gone unaddressed by the Lebanese government. "Lots can be done on the Lebanese side," he argued.

16. (C) Mr. Rosenkrands reported that at the time of his assessment there had been no high-level contact between Lebanese and Syrian border officials, which represented a "bad model" in border management. He said that while some progress had been made to consolidate Lebanese border management from four separate entities into one, the various Lebanese security, military, police, and border elements remained suspicious of each other - often seemingly more interested in monitoring each other than the border.

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PETTY SMUGGLERS, BE WARNED - WEAPONS SMUGGLERS, AHLAN  
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17. (C) Asked if any anecdotal evidence indicated the updated facilities and techniques in the north served to stem the flow of illicit material/goods, Mr. Rosenkrands conceded that there had not been a single case of interdicting a weapons shipment, and there had been only a handful of arrests/detainments related to petty smuggling. He added that the mechanisms and "probably" the will to do more was present in the north to prevent smuggling, but there is far too much corruption. Mr. Rosenkrands reported his team had heard reports of officers being told not to patrol in certain areas during specific times; and he personally noticed in the border logs a recurrence of certain plated cars when a particular border officer was on duty (reftel). He added that many of the border guards had family members involved in the smuggling business, which added to the problem.

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BY SEA AND AIR - INSUFFICIENT CONTROLS ON CARGO REMAIN  
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18. (C) With respect to the airport, Mr. Rosenkrands said the Lebanese seem to have excellent passenger controls - up to

international standards in fact, but lacked sufficient cargo controls. The same assessment applied to Lebanon's port entries, he said, noting there were not efficient mechanisms in place to properly control cargo unloaded by ship.

¶9. (C) With respect to future border assessments, Mr. Rosenkrands had no information on whether a third border assessment would be undertaken.

¶10. (U) This cable was cleared by Embassy Beirut.  
CONNELLY